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UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN



AN ORATION
COMMEMORATIVE OF
PRESIDENT
ABRAHAM LINCOLN;

DELIVERED AT
BROOKLYN, N. Y.,

JUNE 1, 1865,

By RICHARD S. STORRS, JR., D. D.,

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ORATION.

LADIES, AND GENTLEMEN :

IN February, 1861,—amid the chills and sleet of the unfinished winter, and while the gloom of a prescient fear, more oppressive than of any physical season, overshadowed the hearts of the thoughtful and troubled American people,—a number of persons, with one quaint, homely figure in the midst of them, took their departure from Springfield, Illinois, to proceed by gradual stages to Washington. Neighbors and friends were hurriedly assembled to witness the departure; and a few simple and touching words of greeting and farewell were addressed to them by him who was central in the group, and whose kindly face and earnest voice had there, for twenty-four years, been familiar.

Other assemblages, hastily convened, of personal acquaintances and political friends—with here and there some generous or curious political opponents—were afterward encountered, as the company proceeded

from city to city, along the railways which then as now overlay and defined their winding route. At Buffalo, Albany, New York, Philadelphia, and at other points, men came together to see and hear, some to welcome, and some as well to criticise or to warn, the man to whom, by the voice of a plurality of his fellow-countrymen, the conduct of the government for four years to come had been committed. There was much curiosity to be satisfied concerning him. There was a natural eagerness to hear what he might say, that involved any pithy or pregnant suggestion as to what his course was likely to be. But those who remembered the great convocations which in other years had greeted the chieftains in statesmanship as they made their progress through the country, could not but contrast, with the numbers and enthusiasm of such previous assemblages, the meagreness and the dullness of those now convened. And when at last the tall, uncouth, but dominant figure which had been central in these assemblages, disappeared from sight at the capital of Pennsylvania, to reappear suddenly in a hotel at Washington—there was with a few a feeling of relief that suspense was over, and he was safely housed at the Capital; there was with many a feeling of shame that any such precautionary privacy should have been deemed to be needful, and that the small degree of state till then maintained should have been so wholly and abruptly relinquished before he had reached his final goal.

Four crowded and fateful years have passed,—during which the nation for the first time in its history has breasted the shock and tasted the bitterness of a fierce civil war; during which a half-million of men have fallen, dead or maimed, in skirmish and in battle; during which a hundred and fifty thousand households have been shrouded in the gloom that rises only from the grave of the beloved; during which arbitrary measures and policies, unknown to our previous history, have been authorized and enforced; and during which seasons of clamorous expectation, and unjustified hope, have been followed by others of utter despondency, and the passionate reproaches of which this is the parent,—four years have passed, and another company starts from Washington, to bear back to the quiet and distant Springfield all that remains of that form now prostrate, that face and eye now sealed and sightless.

Amid the shining April days, while springing grass and greening boughs proclaim that summer draweth nigh, they leave the Capital—which never before has been so shaken with pain, and grief, and righteous rage—they take the same route which he had traversed when coming in life to his high place, and bear him forever from the scene of his eventful sway. And as they go, the great capitals of the land welcome with such demonstrations of honor as no preceding experience has witnessed, the shrunken, discolored, and pulseless frame. The city through which he passed before in a sheltering

privacy, now crowds tumultuous, in tearful affection, around his bier. The great metropolis,—whose mob then hated him, the leaders of whose fashion turned from him with contempt, and whose authorities sought to insult him—now pours from every street and lane the intent and sad procession of his mourners. Its whole business is suspended; its houses are hung, from base to roof, with funeral weeds; its pavements are thronged with silent, patient, unmoving crowds; its windows gleam with pallid faces; as through the hushed expectant avenues winds, hour by hour, while bells are tolling, and minute-guns with measured boom are counting the instants, that vast, unreckoned, unparalleled procession.

Not capitals only, but States themselves, become his mourners. Churches put off their Easter emblems, to hide pillar, and wall, and arch, in sable woe. Each railway is made a *via Dolorosa*. The spontaneous homage of millions is offered, through the uncovered head, the crape, the wreath, through all the sombre insignia of grief, as the train with its precious burden speeds. The country shrouds its weeping face; and all the blooms of Spring around can bring no flush to its changed countenance; the song and sparkle, and the sweet impulse of which the very air is full, can stir no pulse of gladness or of hope, while still that spectacle haunts its gaze. For over every loyal heart there broods a sorrow as if the most revered had fallen; as if the

shock of personal bereavement had smitten separately every household.

It is to give the reason of this change that we are gathered here to-day. It is to tell why this amazing contrast appears ; which would be yet incredible to us, if our eyes had not seen it, if freshest memories did not to-day remind us of it.

Nay, not of this only must we give explanation. When Abraham Lincoln left his home for that still recent journey to Washington, his name was only known to his countrymen through its association with late and local political discussions. It was utterly unknown, except as it appeared on the ballots of those who had chosen him President, to the other civilized peoples of the world. And when their eyes were unexpectedly turned to him, they saw in him only a village attorney, who had hardly before been responsibly associated with great affairs, whom his friends believed to be honest and sagacious, but whom his opponents described as a rough rail-splitter, of humble origin, of no early advantages, without experience, without signal capacity, and more remarkable than for anything else for his fondness for coarse and pungent jokes. It was therefore with a natural and utter indifference that the multitudes heard his unmusical name. It was with a smug self-satisfaction that the aristocratic leaders of opinion, in England and on the Continent, pointed to the election of such a man, to administer the government at a

critical time, as the final condemnation of Democratic institutions. And it was with a quick and rational anxiety that even educated liberals in Great Britain and France rehearsed what they heard that was favorable to him, and awaited the first indications of his policy.

This was only four years ago. And now, from the entire civilized world arises the chorus of respect for his powers, of admiration for his character, of horror and grief at his untimely end. No other American name since Washington's has become so familiar, or has won such esteem, among the progressive peoples of Europe. It is henceforth a name to charm with, in Italy and in England, on the boulevards of Paris, in the studies of Germany, and among the precipitous passes of the Alps. The presses and the men that once made shifty apologies for him, have honored him for years as one of the leading statesmen of the world. Even the papers which month after month insulted him without stint, now eagerly applaud his prudence, his fortitude, his commanding ability. The English *Punch*, whose ridicule was so bitter that it seemed to have in it a personal malice, confesses its error, and atones for its jeers in lofty and pathetic lines. And with the voices of eulogy and homage rising from his still sorrowing countrymen,—rising not only from the millions he has ruled, and the other millions whom he has emancipated, but even from the impoverished States over whose acres his armies swept, and whose

most practised and crafty commanders his patient wisdom utterly defeated,—with these rise also, in kindred homage, the voices of all the intelligent leaders of opinions and affairs throughout Christendom. Parliaments, as well as peoples, bring their tribute to his memory. The halls of National Assemblies are draped, in sad commemoration of his worth and of his death. And debates are suspended, and diplomacy waits, while Emperors and Queens clasp hands with us before his bier.

It is one of the strangest contrasts in history; and it is of this contrast, as well as of the other, that we to-day are to give explanation. The phenomenon is astonishing. It demands at our hands an adequate solution. But that solution it is not difficult to find.

A singularly critical and eminent position, singularly improved; immense, and almost unparalleled responsibilities, modestly assumed, and with rare capacity, and a rarer patience and magnanimity fulfilled:—here is the key to this strangest sequence. The only eulogy that need be pronounced on him is that which sets just this before us.

Observe first his Position.

Nations are more and more plainly every year the grand, organized, almost personal Powers, to whom is committed the Future of the World. With the steady advances of civilization, individuals are comparatively less influential over the opinion and action of mankind,

except as they affect the Nation they are part of. But the Nation itself becomes every year a mightier presence, a more distinct, efficient actor, amid the system of allied peoples. And to those which fill with their institutions, and outline with their boundaries, the map of Christendom, is the moulding of the destinies of Mankind entrusted.

Their origin is explained, and shown to be not accidental, but providential, as we look at them from this point. Slowly emerging, like the heads of continents, from the waste chaos of the earlier centuries, each one has been unfolded, all have been arranged, on an orderly plan; a plan that contemplates results so vast that we even yet can scarcely predict them. It is not topography, climate, soil, it is not altogether the kinship of blood, it is God, in His eternal wisdom, who has set these Nations in their places, and with Divine prescience and patience of skill has nursed and nurtured their tiny germs, has succored their growth, and has built them to their majestic strength, that through their final combined might, His plans may be realized.

The same thought interprets the permanence of these Nations; the constantly increasing unity of each within itself, the sharper lines that discriminate each from every other. The tendency of our times, with all the advance of individual liberty which has prominently marked them, is not toward the disintegration of empires, but toward their more thorough organization,

their more profound internal oneness. And while forms of government, throughout Europe for example, have been subject to sudden and violent mutations during the two-thirds now elapsed of the present century, it is a fact full of significance that none of its great national organisms has been destroyed; that none of them has been seriously changed in its boundaries, or impaired in its strength. The most important changes among them have been the increased strength of Prussia, and the emerging into substantive existence of the kingdom of Italy. The progress of free thought within their boundaries has not dissolved, but has only developed them. The progress of invention, overleaping those boundaries, and making neighbors of distant peoples, has not obliterated or even obscured the historic lines that stand between them. The centripetal force within each has the mastery; and in its more intimate self-centred coherence each stands more clearly apart from the rest. The public life incorporated in it,—from whatsoever ancestry derived, by whatsoever influences trained, through whatsoever experience developed, and in whatsoever legislations, letters, or arts revealed,—maintains its identity, and only perfects its force, and is prepared always for a larger impression upon the progress and culture of the world.

Yet while this development within each is going on, the equilibrium of all is only thereby more firmly es-

tablished, and the relations between them become vital and constant. Diplomatic alliances only tardily and partly represent the progress of their moral sympathies. Because it is separate, each acts on the others with which it is allied, with more freedom, directness, and positive force. Its acts, and reacts. It gives, and it gathers. It makes its own peculiar contributions, of art, thought, commercial exchange, moral power ; and it receives those which are brought to it in return. And through this continual reciprocity, more vital than treaties, more effective than international congresses, each assists the progress of every other, and all work together, whether consciously or not, toward general results.

Into the ultimate power of Christendom goes therefore a force derived in part from every people. The influence of each is made cosmopolitan. And it becomes more evident constantly that not by individuals, but by these Nations,—so separate yet associated, always more unlike, but always also more intimately allied,—is gradually to be reared the world-wide structure of a Universal Civilization ; that as the great Persons of the continents and the ages, they are to elaborate the welfare of Mankind, and accomplish His plans who is the ruler and the architect of all.

There is nothing that more clearly sets God before us in the scope of His designs, that more vividly unfolds the significance of History, that

more sublimely impresses on our thoughts the grandeur of the times in which we live, than this view of Nations, as the ever-renewed and co-operative workers, whose power and patience are to build up the Future. The earth is illustrious, through their presence upon it. The Future is secure, through the mighty concurrence with which they march toward it. And the brain that swings yonder suns into systems is not so unsearchable as that which orders this mighty plan.

And now among these vast, historic, almost personal Powers, it is not presumptuous or idle to feel that this of which we ourselves are part, is to have a special and an eminent place. We feel it instinctively. An audible undertone in European society shows the world aware of it.

Placed on a continent where it stands by itself, and from which its influence passes continually, across both oceans, to affect all peoples whom commerce reaches, all tribes indeed whose languages are known; founded at the beginning, as Chatham said, 'upon ideas of Liberty,' and prepared by the very blood that went into it, as well as by its subsequent training, to illustrate the capacity of Christianized men to organize and maintain a democratic autonomy; with a vast force of thought, will, feeling, faith, of all that makes the intensest moral life of a Nation, inherited by it, and continually nourished by schools, presses, churches, homes, by all the labors it has had to perform, and all the hopes that have strengthened its heart,—it cannot be but that this Nation

shall affect with still increasing power the other civilized peoples of the Earth. In a degree it does this already ; and when its energies shall cease to be concentrated, as they hitherto have been, on the preparation of the country itself for its habitation, and the swift and mighty mastery of its riches, and on the fashioning and the upbuilding of its own institutions,—when the educational influences that mould it shall have come to their fruition, and the spirit of the Nation shall be finally formed and declared,—it must pour abroad, through constant channels, an infinite influence.

Either with distrust, then, anxiety, fear, or with confidence, affection, expectation, the thoughtful minds throughout the world must look upon the people here established : whose existence is so recent, its development so rapid, its history so remarkable, and whose future hitherto has seemed so uncertain. It is not one fact, or another, by itself, that secures this interest of the civilized world in our Republic. The whole drift of civilization makes it inevitable. For good or for evil there is here a power that must affect the entire system of associated Nations, to make or mar the Future they are building. And yonder ocean may as easily be withdrawn from the sight of our eyes, the continent itself may as easily be obliterated from the map of the world, as the sense of the connection of the development of this people with the destinies of the Race be stricken from our minds, or from the general judgment of Christendom.

When then a terrific crisis suddenly appeared in our public experience—when a wide-sweeping and passionate rebellion threatened to become a complete revolution, to split the Nation into fragments, and to change the course of its development forever—it was not wonderful, it was only inevitable, that more than by any other event of modern times the thoughts of Mankind should be occupied with it; that here not only but all abroad it should be felt that the palpable leaves of destiny were turning; that forces were evolved than which none others more portentous had broken upon the world since the modern Nations of Europe were born. It was inevitable that with diverse hopes and opposite predictions not Americans only but the peoples of Christendom should look to see what the issue was to be.

No man on this continent, therefore, since Washington's day, has had such room as was given to him whose death we mourn to manifest all of power and character which he possessed; to manifest this to the eyes of the Nation, to the eyes of Mankind. No other man has had the chance to so utterly wreck himself, and bury his name in an absolute ignominy, amid the sinking fortunes of his country. And, on the other hand, to no other man has been given the opportunity to make for himself a place forever in the inmost heart of the Nation which he saved; to make for himself a

world-wide fame ; to touch the centuries still to come, and gild their skies with higher splendor. And it is because he proved himself equal to the critical, providential, unparalleled position,—because he so bore himself in his grand office that all men saw him a man to be loved, a statesman to be trusted, a patriot to be followed through darkest perils without dismay,—therefore it is that eulogies now make the continents vocal ; that those eulogies take the poetic form which only intensity of feeling produces ; and that one of the grandest names of the World is to be henceforth, while history continues, the plain, untitled, and recent name of Abraham Lincoln.

So much for his Position. Observe now the personal Character and Power which he brought to his office and the Work which he wrought in it.—Of course the full exhibition of these would take volumes, not paragraphs, and be the occupation of months of leisure instead of a few hurrying hours. Yet we may notice the leading traits, and recognize briefly the more prominent powers of mind and will, by which he became so apt for his work ; and may glance, at least, at the principal features of the great work itself.

It is an impulse of the heart with every one who speaks of him to delineate first his moral properties ; and though these may be dwelt upon so exclusively as to seem to involve an injurious forgetfulness of the great intellectual abilities he possessed, yet the course

of discussion thus suggested is the one which every one still must take if he would not violently constrain and divert his own mental processes; if he would not repulse the public heart. The moral, which should be supreme in every man, was so, to a degree almost unexampled, in President Lincoln. It made the prime impression of the man on those who approached him. It shines most prominently before us to-day, throughout that crowded and turbulent history along whose dizzy paths he has led us. It will be spoken of first and most fondly wherever future American parents repeat his sayings, rehearse his traits, and tell to their children the story of his career. Of this then, first, we may, and we must, with propriety speak.

And yet it is impossible to speak of it as we would, because it is impossible to comprise in words that subtle, essential spirit of Character, which was paramount in him; and because—when we analyze, as we say, such a Character, and distribute its single though complex beauty, into the traits which made it up—it is like fracturing the diamond to exhibit it; it is like unbraiding the strand of light, to show the sunbeam's inmost splendor. So far, however, as any formula can express what must, by virtue of its spiritual nature, elude the grasp and surpass the compass of verbal propositions, it may be said that a deep, unselfish Sympathy with Men, a profound Conviction of the validity and authority of certain great principles of Equity

and Liberty, and an abiding personal Faith in the overruling Providence of God, were the principal and permanent constituent forces in the Character which he showed.

The genesis of this, the influences by which it was rooted and formed in him, it must be left to the biographer to unfold. The Character itself, which these elements composed, is as distinct as it is also great; and the memory of it will live forever.

Wholly individual, utterly genuine,—so independent of outward circumstances that obscurity had not at all embittered it, and investiture with the vast prerogatives of office only gave it new development, through immenser opportunities,—it was the essential moral force on which the Nation for four years hung, as on a very power of nature; from which, more than from any thing else, it has drawn its present stability and hope; and by reason of which the death of him in whom it was revealed has thrilled with new and strange emotion the civilized world.

His Sympathy with Men was shown not only in his singularly warm personal attachments, to his family and his friends, to all who for any considerable time were confidentially associated with him; it was shown as well in that kindness to the poor, the sorrowful, the imperilled, with instances of which the journals of the country, for four years past, have been running over. The wearied, sick, or wounded soldier found

always a friend in him as solicitous for his welfare as if he had been his kinsman by birth. The little children in the Home for the Destitute were touched by the tearful tenderness and dignity, the instructive clearness, and the quickening playfulness, with which he addressed them. The poor freed people—who had escaped from the slavery through which his armies crushed their way, but had escaped to communities that seemed less friendly than those they had left, and had passed from a bondage which at least had given them shelter and food, to a liberty that threatened to doom them to idleness, and to overwhelm them in an absolute want—it was not with ostentatious charity, it was with no splendid philanthropical theory, it was with a tender welcoming respect, that he heard their story, examined their condition, and opened the way for escape from their fears.

After four years of incessant, bloody, desperate struggle, he entered Richmond, with characteristic unostentation,—not at the head of marshalled armies, with banners advanced and trumpets sounding, but as a private gentleman, on foot, with an officer on one side, holding the hand of his boy on the other. An aged negro met him on the street, and said—with the tears streaming down his face, as he bowed low his uncovered head—"God bress you, Massa Lincoln!" The President paused, raised his hat on the instant, and with a hearty "I thank you, Sir," acknowledged with

a bow the greeting. Instinctively he recognized the poorest as his peer, and the black man as his brother.

On each of two days, in all his brief and burdened weeks, he gave some hours to receiving the petitions of those who sought from him any personal favor. He took upon himself, with glad alacrity, the labor of investigating claims for relief which had been always under other administrations, which should have been under his, referred at once to subordinate officers. He did it because he could not help it. His nature demanded it; and that nature could not be expelled with a pitch-fork. No trophies won by legislators or generals ever disturbed, for the tenth of a minute, his healthful slumbers. But the mere recollection of a case of suffering which he had not relieved, of an instance of anxiety which he had not soothed as quickly as he might, would keep him tossing for many hours on an unrestful bed. And it was not a burden, but always a relief to him, to turn from eminent public affairs to talk with the poor who sought his aid, and to bind up with assiduous skill the wounds of the sorrowful.

The same spirit was revealed, in a more unique exhibition, in his sympathetic regard for his opponents. He laughed at the jokes which were made about himself; was tolerant, to a degree before unexampled, of attacks on his policy; and never took a particle of venom into his nature from all the virulent assaults that were

made on him. While holding tenaciously to his own views and plans, he never failed to do generous justice to the reasons and the motives of those who combated them ; to recognize in them wherever he could, and sometimes where none of his colleagues could, a patriotism as genuine as his own, and a purpose as true to secure and promote the general welfare. He talked with, reasoned with, wrote to them, in this spirit ; was not moved from his position of friendliness toward them by their misconceptions or their abuse ; and never could believe them traitorous in their hearts till the overt act had compelled him to see it.

Toward even those who had dangerously offended against the laws, he hardly could bring himself to adopt any course save one of the utmost clemency and gentleness. He pardoned with so much eagerness that one of his own cabinet officers declared that the power of pardoning should be taken from him. The military discipline of the army itself was more than once in danger of decay, through his inability to order the final penalties inflicted on those who had incurred them ; and spies and traitors within the Capital were shielded, more than was easily reconciled with the safety of the Government, by his unwillingness to have them subjected to any harsh measures.

Of course his sensibilities came gradually to be under the control of his judgment, while the counsels of others constrained him sometimes to a severity which he

hated; so that at length the order for the merited restraint or punishment of public offenders was frequently, though always reluctantly, ratified by him. But his sympathy with men, in whatever condition, of whatever opinions, in whatsoever wrongs involved, was so native and constant, and so controlling, that he was always not so much inclined as pre-determined to the mildest and most generous theory possible. And something of peril, as well as of promise, was involved to the public in this element of his nature.

He would not admit that he was in danger of the very assassination by which at last his life was taken, and only yielded with a protest to the precautions which others felt bound to take for him; because his own sympathy with men was so strong that he could not believe that any would meditate serious harm to him. The public policy of his administration was constantly in danger of being too tardy, lenient, pacific, toward those who were combined for deadly battle against the Government, because he was so solicitous to win, so anxious to bless, and so reluctant sharply to strike. *Sic semper tyrannis*, shouted his wild, theatric assassin, as he leaped upon the stage:—making the ancient motto of Virginia a legend of shame forevermore. But no magistrate ever lived who had less of the tyrant in his natural or his habitual temper. In all the veins of all his frame no drop of unsympathetic blood found a channel. When retaliation seemed the

only just policy for the Government to adopt, to save its soldiers from being shot in cold blood, or being starved into idiocy, it was simply impossible for him to accept it. And if he had met the arch-conspirators face to face,—those who had racked and really enlarged the English vocabulary to get terms to express their hatred and disgust toward him individually, those who were striking with desperate blows at the National existence—it would have been hard for him not to greet them with open hand and a kindly welcome.

The very element of sadness, which was so inwrought with his mirthfulness and humor, and which will look out on coming generations through the pensive lines upon his face, and the light of his pathetic eyes, came into his spirit, or was constantly renewed there, through his sympathy with men, especially with the oppressed and the poor. He took upon himself the sorrows of others. He bent in extremest personal suffering under the blows that fell on his countrymen. And when the bloody rain of battle was sprinkling the trees and the sod of Virginia, during successive dreary campaigns, his inmost soul felt the baptism of it, and was sickened with grief. ‘I cannot bear it’—‘I cannot bear it,’—he said more than once, as the story was told him of the sacrifice required to secure some result. No glow, even of triumph, could expel from his eyes the tears occasioned by the suffering that had bought it.

And yet through this native sympathy with men he gained a large part of his immense power over his country and his times. From it in part came, no doubt, the sublime temperateness of his spirit. He lived in times when a man without this must now and then have flamed into passion, at the arrogant ferocity that taunted and smote him. But no man remembers an hour in his life when passion made his accents tremble. He hated slavery with a life-long abhorrence, and wrestled with it for four fierce years in deadly grapple; and many men, not hating it more, not feeling it so much, had come not unnaturally to transfer to persons their wrath against the system, and had been embittered through their just indignation. He kept the utter sweetness of his spirit, as if he had been a child by the fire-side. His blood was not heated in the desperate struggle; and even conscience offended could not make him acrimonious.

He gained another power through this sympathy with men. Not only by it did he come to be endeared, so as no President preceding him had been, to the universal heart of the Nation, to its women and children, as well as its men; not only did its rare vital force surpass our boundaries, and make the humble abroad his friends;—he came, by virtue of it in great measure, to be the Representative Man of the people. It brought him into spontaneous correspondence with the average thought and feeling of the country.

He did not depend on witnesses and counsellors. He 'knew in himself' what the "plain people" wanted, whom he honored and believed in, to whose ranks he expected soon to return, and who, as he said, were willing and able to save the government, if the government would do its part indifferently well.

Through a process imperceptible to himself, no doubt, in its methods and modes, but natural to his sympathetic constitution, he came to dwell in such accord with the public—not with any one party, or any one set of leaders and thinkers, but with the collective spirit of the Nation—that when he spoke it felt its thought articulated through him; and his ultimate decision, on almost any question, announced and sealed the public judgment.

The independence of his policy had its origin here. He was always ready to hear and consider any opinion. The most conservative, the most violently radical, were equally at home with him. Yet the eloquent or ingenious advocates of a theory often found, to their surprise, that they had less influence over his counsels than over those of men whom they thought his superiors. The truth is, the entire public was his teacher. His nature drew, through secret ducts, the wisdom of the Nation into itself; and the roots of his matured opinions were as wide as the country.

His policy was plastic, too, and legitimately progressive, as well as independent; because it represented,

in successive stages, the popular mind. And where any man with a fixed and inflexible personal theory, which he must carry out, would inevitably have found it too narrow and rigid to encompass the crisis, and would have seen it hopelessly shattered in the progress of events, his policy was modified and expanded with time, because he kept abreast with the people he ruled. He carried their purpose and thought in himself. He grew with their growth, and shared in their advancing wisdom; and so, to the end, his plans were elastic, and the Nation gave, to realize those plans—which did but incorporate its wisest opinions—its whole tremendous and unreserved power.

But with this element of Sympathy with Men we must combine, in inseparable union, the others I have named, to get an adequate impression of his Character: He had a profound and enduring Conviction of the value and authority of certain great principles of Equity and of Liberty; while nothing was more vital or positive in him than his Faith in the rule and the providence of God.—From these elements his Character took firmness, greatness, an individual force and majesty. He was kept from becoming a mere sensitive exponent of the popular feeling, and became instead a noble Chief Magistrate, instructed by all, yet more instructing them in return.

They who thought him only a shrewd politician were singularly mistaken. He was that, no doubt;

but history will certainly rank him also among our most philosophical statesmen. The great ethical principles which, though invisible, are primitive, organic, in our National development, by which our history has been vitally moulded, and through which that history becomes important to the world—these had to him essential reality, and an incomparable value. His love for the very system of Government of which he became the grand defender, had its origin in its relation to these principles; its actual approximate correspondence with them; its capacity to be shaped to express them more perfectly; its fitness and power to extend them. Without rhythm in his sentences, or any taste for esthetic art, the ideal in the State moved him more than the material, and was always an educating presence to his mind.

Sprung from the soil, a child of the teeming and wealthy West, it might have been expected that the mere physical greatness of the country would have allured and toned his thought; that its vast expanse, with its prodigal progress in wealth, population, and all resources, would have been to him, as they had been to many others of our statesmen, both from the East and from the West, the occasion of his grateful and proud admiration. But, on the other hand, he seems hardly to have thought of them. He took them for granted; only casually referred to them; and was scarcely sustained or moved in his work by any con-

siderations derived from them. The effort of the conspirators in league against the Government to wrench apart what God had bolted together with mountains, and had laced inextricably into one by the marvellous system of Western rivers,—their effort to sever the National domain, and to build two empires where climate, race, topography, language, combined to demand that there should be but one,—this does not seem to have roused him against it. So far as appears he never was stirred by the natural and not unlaudable ambition to have the country remain as of old, surpassing others in its physical extent, and outshining them with its more splendid treasures.

But the Principles involved in the National institutions were to him inexpressibly sacred and dear; and against the warfare made upon these, on behalf of an ambition which instinctively hated them, he set his kindly face like a flint. Even the historic recollections of the Nation were chiefly important or significant to him as connected with these principles; and the moral unity derived from these was that which in his thought knit the present to the past, and made our diverse peoples one. So he said at the West, in 1858, of the Germans, Irishmen, Frenchmen, Scandinavians, who have come here since the war of Independence: “If they look back through our history to trace their connection with those days of blood, they find they have none; they cannot carry themselves back into that

glorious epoch, and make themselves feel that they are part of us. But when they look through the Declaration of Independence, they find that these old men say that 'we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal;' and then they feel that that moral sentiment, taught in that day, evidences their relation to these men; that it is the Father of all moral principle in them; and that they have a right to claim it, as though they were blood of the blood, and flesh of the flesh, of the men who wrote that Declaration. And so they have. That is the electric cord that links the hearts of patriotic and liberty-loving men together; that will link those patriotic hearts as long as the love of freedom exists in the minds of men."

So he said afterward, in 1861, substantially at Trenton, and more fully at Philadelphia: "It was not the mere matter of the separation of the colonies from the Mother-Land, but it was that sentiment in the Declaration of Independence, which gave liberty, not alone to the people of this country, but I hope to the world, for all future time. It was that which promised that in due time the weight would be lifted from the shoulders of all men;"—adding, with what now looks like prescience, "If this country cannot be saved without giving up that principle, I was about to say, I would rather be assassinated on this spot than surrender it."

From this conviction of the essential authority and value, and the enduring cosmical importance, of the

principles he maintained, came in part, no doubt, his singular freedom from personal assumption, from all personal greed for pleasure or gain. He was called, by one who knew him well, 'the honestest man he had ever known;' and certainly no man's pecuniary honesty has been tested more thoroughly—with uncounted millions at his command, and a secret service, responsible to him, which swallowed gold as thirsty sands soak up the rain. But his honesty was not a separate trait, set mechanically into his nature, and governing what was alien to it. It was a part, living and inseparable, of his conscientious and ingenuous mind. He believed in the Right, for himself and for others. Its rules were clear to him, its authority perfect; and it governed him in small things as well as in the greatest.

From this came also his singular patience, and his unwearied courage, in regard to the issue of the terrible contest. Sadly as he felt the sacrifice it involved, inclined as he was to distrust himself, and knowing as none beside could know with what manifold perils the cause was beset, he seems never to have doubted the final result. The mind of the public, fixed chiefly on the visible forces engaged, wavered often, sometimes violently oscillated, between the utmost confidence of success and the most extreme depression and fear. He held with marvellous steadiness on his way; never exasperated, never over-elated, yet always expecting sure victory in the end, if it took a life-time to attain it; because

his hold on the principles involved was utterly infrangible, and their ultimate victory he believed to be certain. He saw the Divine forces which, all unheard by mortal ear, were still contending on our side; and he knew that till Christianity went down, Slavery could not succeed against Liberty. The 'rapture of battle' he never felt. The 'courage of conscience' he always knew; and the key to all his policy is found in one sentence of one of his speeches, before he was President: "Let us have faith that Right makes Might; and in that faith let us to the end dare to do our duty as we understand it."

The same element in his Character, the same unswerving confidence in principles, gave a true moral unity to his administration. It imparted a certain philosophical tone, almost a religious, to much of his statesmanship; a tone most emphatic in his latest Address. A latent enthusiasm was bred in him by it; an enthusiasm that rarely was wrought into utterance, but that kept all his powers in most complete exercise, while it sometimes made his sentences throb with its inward fervor. He became, in some sense, to his own consciousness, a consecrated man; consecrated to the championship of principles of Government, 'by which,' as he said, 'the Republic lives and keeps alive,' and in which the whole human race has a stake. Hence came the undertone that thrilled through his short address at Gettysburgh, which is more henceforth to the American people than

the stateliest oration preserved in its archives. Hence came, in part, the tranquility and the scope of his high-leveled policy. It was to himself an inspiration; while it gave him a power over the enlightened reason of the people which no other President since Washington has had.

With this came also, in intimate agreement, that sense of the presence and providence of God, which seems never to have wavered, from the time when he went forth from Springfield for Washington, asking the friends whom he left to pray for him, till the time when he said, in his latest Address, "As was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether." Without the least taint of fanaticism, his belief in God's regard for the principles which he was defending, was so earnest and constant, and at last so devout, that the whole long war became to him a sacred war. He recognized the guidance of Providence throughout it, in our reverses as well as our successes, and saw the forecast that had shaped it. Reverently, practically, he felt himself but an instrument in God's hand; and knew that when the Divine consummation had been attained, the mystic and awful tragedy would be over. "Let us be quite sober," he said; "let us diligently apply the means, never doubting that a just God, in His own good time, will give us the rightful result."

Hence came the crown of dignity on the character in

which sympathy with men, and conscientious fidelity to principles, had been before so intimately blended. No man can be morally great whose soul does not rest on God as its centre, and does not draw from communion with Him its inmost life. Especially when the leader in great affairs stands face to face with the possible speedy wreck of his country,—when he treads a path all hidden and perilous, without precedent to govern, or parallel to direct him, and sees the contracting horizon around shot through with blood, and all a-flame,—the only thing to keep him staunch, serene, clear-visioned, is trust in the Highest. It was the life within his life to him whom we mourn. Not uttering itself in any set phrase, not prompting much to religious ceremonial, it gave him a steadiness almost invincible. It made him expectant of a Future as grand as the way that led to it was bloody and dark. It united his soul with all that was highest in the heart and conscience of the People which he ruled.

It was this alone which enabled him to say, in closing his second Inaugural Address, in words that illustrate the whole Character of the man, and that will live while the language in which they were uttered endures: “With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on, to finish the work we are in; to bind up the Nation’s wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and his orphans;

to do all which we may to achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves, and with all Nations.”

Combine now, with all these loftier elements, a natural mirthfulness that was constant, exuberant, that sparkled into jest and story, and kept his faculties always fresh;—remember that these so various traits were melted together into a Character utterly simple, utterly personal, in which was nothing copied from antique models, and nothing imported from foreign examples, which was wholly an American product, born of the influences that had moulded his youth, and nourished by the woods, the river, and the prairie, as modern as the West, and as native as its oaks;—remember that through the whole atmosphere of the times this Character daily radiated influence, in some quaint word or comic story, so that all saw the identity of it, and felt that, as was said of him once, ‘if he were passed through all hoppers in the universe, and ground into dust a million times, when put together again at the end he would come out simply Abraham Lincoln;’—and then remember that what the country needed and craved, a thousand times more than splendid talents, was such thorough and permanent goodness in its Head, honesty, fidelity, patience, magnanimity, and an unsuspected integrity of purpose,—and you have in part the explanation of that prodigious hold which he gained on the country which he ruled, and on the world which watched that country.

The magnetism that held the Nation steadfastly to him had here its vital source and seat. He made mistakes; men did not defend, did not feel it very necessary to apologize for them. He was not omniscient, and his judgment might sometimes be in error. But his character was what the people wanted; too lenient, sometimes, but kindly, tolerant, patient, always; without a trace of arrogance or of passion; as little imperious as the air or the sunshine; as little likely to be crazed with ambition as the clouds, from which drop the showers of Spring, to distil their kindly dews into venom. And a character like this was incomparably more to the imperilled and anxious people than the utmost ability without it would have been.

There is such a thing as moral genius;—a temper so wholly individual and original, so vitally compact of various excellencies, and so alive with personal force, that it sustains and attracts more than do splendid intellectual powers. And it was this moral genius which America wanted, which he supplied. By virtue of it, he seemed to fill the land with his example. He incarnated not only, but instructed and inspired, the temper of the People; till it had more confidence in him than it had in itself. Amid arbitrary arrests, and damaging defeats, its trust in his temper never yielded. ‘His very mistakes’ as one has said, ‘became omnipotent.’ For, through the whole of his strange term of office—after the Nation had come to know him—it was

a source to it of central joy that one so faithful, sympathetic, conscientious, was supreme in the government ; that a will so earnestly trustful in Providence was guiding the forces which Providence had evolved ; that hands so pure had been found to bear, across the stony wilderness of fear, and through the mounting seas of blood, the civil Constitution, which is to the Republic its consecrated ark.

But Character alone, even one so original and so eminent as his, could never explain the singular place attained by Mr. Lincoln in the respect of the Country and the World ; could never wholly account for the work which he accomplished. Intellectual power, executive faculty, a large capacity for skilful and laborious administration, are also implied in such mastership as his ; and aside from these, amid such times as ours have been, he must have proved a simple drift-log on the current, unable to govern it, only rushing with it toward the abyss. As we turn, then, to consider his nature in this view, we shall find, I think, that a remarkable faculty for exact and discriminating Thought was combined in him with immense Common Sense, and great practical Sagacity ; while his executive force was imparted by a Will yielding in small things, but tenacious in great, and capable of long-continued exertion.

These were the instruments through which his patient spirit wrought to its great issues. They made the force, not splendid, but practical and effective, which took

from his Character 'the consecration and the gleam,' and of which that which we have derived from him is the permanent fruit.

The exact and incisive habit of his mind was constantly shown in his papers and speeches, and even in his unstudied utterances. His jests were always more remarkable than for anything else for their absolute fitness to the point illustrated. The fun that was in them, even when it was coarse, was weighted with meaning, and edged with sharp thought. They were, what Lord Bacon says proverbs are—'the edge-tools of speech, which cut and penetrate the knots of affairs.' His discriminations were always accurate; and no sophistry could stand before the fire of his analysis.

Where has the essential un wisdom of Secession, even supposing it wholly successful, ever been more succinctly exposed than it was by him in his first Inaugural: "Physically speaking, we cannot separate. We cannot remove our respective sections from each other, nor build an impassable wall between them. * * Is it possible then to make our intercourse more advantageous, or more satisfactory, after separation than before? Can aliens make treaties, easier than friends can make laws? Can treaties be more faithfully enforced between aliens, than laws can among friends?"

Where has the argument against the Constitutional right of Secession been more tersely, yet more completely set forth, than in these words: "Perpetuity is im-

plied if not expressed in the fundamental law of all National Governments. * * Continue to execute all the express provisions of our National Constitution, and the Union will endure forever; it being impossible to destroy it, except by some action not provided for in the instrument itself." And where has ever the absurdity of the argument for the right of Secession, derived from the general doctrine of State Rights, been more sharply exhibited than in a sentence or two of his first Message: "If all the States save one should assert their right to drive that one out of the Union, it is presumed the whole class of Seceder politicians would at once deny the power, and denounce the act as the grossest outrage upon State Rights. But suppose that precisely the same act, instead of being called driving the one out, should be called the seceding of the others from it,—it would be exactly what the Seceders claim to do; unless, indeed, they make the point," he adds with an irony not less cutting because it is gentle, "unless they make the point, that the one, because it is a minority, may rightfully do what the others, because they are a majority, may not rightfully do."

In his entire treatment of the right of Secession, the same sharp and destructive analysis is shown. Thus: "A part of the present National debt was contracted to pay the old debt of Texas. Is it just that she shall leave, and pay no part of this herself? If one State

may secede, so may another ; and when all shall have seceded, none is left to pay the debts. Is this quite just to creditors?"—how his lips must have smiled as he wrote the question ! "Did we notify them of this sage view of ours when we borrowed their money ?" Again : "The Constitution provides, and all the States have accepted the provision, that the United States shall guarantee to every State in this Union a Republican form of Government. But if a State may lawfully go out of the Union, having done so it may also discard the Republican form of Government. So that to prevent its going out, is an indispensable means to the end of maintaining the guarantee mentioned ; and where an end is lawful and obligatory, the indispensable means to it are also lawful and obligatory."

As further illustrative of the same property and tendency of his mind, remember a sentence or two from his letter to those in Kentucky who though loyal to the Government objected to the Emancipation Proclamation, and wished it recalled : "It shows a gain of a hundred and thirty thousand soldiers, seamen, and laborers [for the Union cause.] Now let any Union man who complains of the measure test himself, by writing down in one line, that 'he is for subduing the Rebellion by force of arms ;' and, in the next, that 'he is for taking these hundred and thirty thousand men from the Union side, and placing them where they would be but for the measure which he condemns.' If

he cannot face his cause so stated, it is because he cannot face the truth."

So, in a letter written much earlier, to those at the West who objected to his policy: "You say that you will not fight to free negroes. Some of them seem to be willing to fight for you, but no matter. Fight you then exclusively to save the Union. I issued the proclamation on purpose to aid you in saving the Union. Whenever you shall have conquered all resistance to the Union, if I shall urge you to continue fighting, it will be an apt time for you to declare that you will not fight to free negroes. I thought that in your struggle for the Union to whatever extent the negroes should cease helping the enemy, to that extent it weakened that enemy in his resistance to you. Do you think differently? I thought that whatever negroes can be got to do as soldiers, leaves just so much less for white soldiers to do in saving the Union. Does it appear otherwise to you? But negroes, like other people, act upon motives. Why should they do anything for us, if we will do nothing for them? If they stake their lives for us, they must be prompted by the strongest motive, even the promise of Freedom. And the promise, being made, must be kept."

It is evident that before a mind so careful, so perspicuous, so analytic as this, there was but little chance for sophisms to stand; and that whatever secured the assent of one so accustomed to logical processes, and to

clear discriminations, was likely at least to have much in its favor, if not to be finally accepted and ratified by the public judgment. But the faculty of careful ratiocination is not synonymous with practical sagacity; and a mind addicted to the logical exercise may be even fatally narrowed thereby—losing in general perceptive sensibility, in administrative skill, and in breadth of reason, while it gains in particular dialectical force. In attempting to explain, then, the unrivalled personal position attained by Mr. Lincoln, the singular power exercised by him, not only over public affairs, but over the sentiments and convictions of the people, and over the general mind of Mankind, it is of cardinal consequence to observe, that with this careful precision of Thought he combined a really supreme Common Sense; a practical Sagacity, so intuitive and enlightening that, though it did not keep him from committing mistakes, it kept him from any fatal error, and justified always that confidence in his plans which at first it inspired.

His mind possessed scope, as well as sharpness. He looked on the right hand, and on the left, before he smote. His reason saw before and after; and in the clear comprehension of results, and of the methods by which to attain them, his judgment showed itself as discursive and prescient, as his power of analysis was trenchant and fine.—Here was really the centre of his strength; the fruitful source of his success as a States-

man. And when associated, as it was, with the Character we have sketched, and with a tenacious and patient Will, it goes very far toward explaining his power, and interpreting his work.

There is a showy but dangerous kind of mind sometimes employed in the offices of statesmanship, whose power lies, and also its peril, in what may be called intellectual constructiveness. It deals largely with the abstract. It is mighty in making paper governments. Its schemes express ideal conceptions; and it counts it almost a degradation to stoop to consider practical necessities. It theorizes splendidly on what ought to be, and insists that the facts shall correspond with the theory; or, if either must give way, that the facts shall be displaced to make room for the theory. The vast, intricate, gradual administration of public affairs, which contemplates many interests, and has to deal with great masses of men, it would mould relentlessly by preconceived metaphysical plans; and it is always unsatisfied, until the two distinctly correspond.

There is much that is striking in this style of mind. It is apt to win a large share of admiration, especially among the studious and refined. It is an important element, no doubt, in public counsels: because, when arrayed, as it usually is, in a speculative opposition to the actual governing forces in a Nation, its criticisms are helpful. They tend to expand the horizon of rulers, and to lift toward the austere levels of reason what

might otherwise sink to the plane of expediency and political tactics. If its shining air-palaces do not become solid terrestrial successes, they yet hold before men the ideal forms of public development; and the workers beneath may build better and higher for having surveyed them.

But when such a mind is placed itself at the head of affairs,—unless it has that reach of vision, with that vividness of perception, which belong only to the highest genius, and unless possessed of a knowledge of facts that is well nigh omniscient,—it is sure to be found incompetent to its task. Especially in difficult and critical times, when great elemental forces are evolved beneath and overhead, when the whirlwinds of passion are loosed from their chambers, and sudden currents, which no chart shows, are hurled to and fro with fierce velocity, while the Nation drifts and drives before them in unexpected directions,—such a mind as this is the poorest of pilots. Its beautiful schemes no more match the emergency than ingenious theorems arrest the typhoon. It wants tact, invention, insight, hardihood. Losing sight of the headlands, it fails to make allowance for variations of the compass. It does not hear the boom of the surf on the rocks to leeward. The awful volume and onset of the storm are too much for its theoretic navigation; and the crew must mutiny, and put a more practical man at the head, or crew and ship will go to the bottom.

Not such, certainly, was the mind of Mr. Lincoln. Men quarrelled with him sometimes, because he had not more of this wholly intellectual and ethical tendency. But if he had had more, the Nation and the World might not to-day have been his mourners.

There is, on the other hand, a cheap and sterile species of shrewdness, which often calls itself Common Sense,—which sometimes even passes for such, when it is installed in positions of influence,—which makes nothing of principles, but everything of what it conceives to be ‘facts.’ It has no ideal; but takes its suggestions from the newspapers, from the caucuses, from the last man who speaks. Its plans are moulded by no ethical harmonies, by no fitness even to serve great ends, but by immediate personal influences. It prides itself on being exclusively practical; on aiming to conserve what already exists, to hold parties together, to smooth away differences, and to reconcile by a dexterous manipulation antagonist interests. It discredits the higher nature of the People, and thinks anything can be carried by a skilful and timely handling of Conventions. It has faith in one thing:—political management. It knows one rule:—to do what is popular. It is constant to one purpose:—to keep things quiet. It sometimes achieves in peaceful days a transient success, and wins, perhaps, from the more unthinking, a superficial applause. But its end, even then, is generally failure; since it never awakens a generous impulse, and never

inspires any general confidence. And in times of imminent public peril, it is not insufficient only, but essentially dangerous. Trivial by nature, when the pressure comes upon it, it first becomes trickish, and then becomes treacherous. Losing head altogether, in the final crisis, it is likely to carry everything that depends on it into sudden and uttermost wreck.

Such has been the style of mind too often exhibited among those who have ranked as political leaders, on one side or the other, in our country and time. Such was, perhaps, the style of mind men feared would appear in President Lincoln, before they had had experience of him. But such, thank God! was as far as possible from being the type or the parallel of the mind, which by degrees was brought out in him.

Not addicted to theorizing, and dogmatic speculation, in no sense a *doctrinaire*, he was not either a man of expedients; a simply shrewd, unfruitful manager of political affairs. Clear-sighted by nature, he had kept his judgment healthy and strong, by intercourse with men, and by a pure and manly life; and so he was ready without being rash, wary and cool, without the slightest timidity. Quick to perceive, he was slow to decide, offering liberal hospitality to all discreet counsels, and determined to discover what was best on the whole, whether it agreed with any theory or not. And when immense exigencies suddenly confronted him, he kept his balance; he was not bewildered in the crisis; and

if he did not show that marvellous genius which illuminates all things with one broad flash, he showed an intuitive and large Common Sense; a calm, persistent, wide-sighted Sagacity; that quality of mind which enables its possessor to see principles clearly, but to see also the governing practical necessities amid which those principles must be unfolded; which makes him wise in selecting his methods, and sure, if not swift, in accomplishing his ends. He showed, in other words, not indeed in an absolute degree, but in a very high and remarkable degree, precisely that species of mental ability which an intelligent democracy craves in its Ruler; precisely that which was needed for the times; precisely that without which a showy faculty for theorizing, or a mere trained political shrewdness, would infallibly have brought us to speedy destruction. Through this he did his unequalled work for the Land and the World. And this will always shine paramount in him, while his history is read.

Observe what illustration it found in his action; how continual, and how manifold.

When he came into power the Nation was as a company lost in the woods; with sudden gulfs sinking before it; with stealthy robbers lurking near; with utter darkness overhead; the sun gone down, the light of all the constellations quenched. No man knew certainly what to do, which way to turn, on whom to rely. There was danger in advancing, perhaps greater

in delay ; danger that everything precious might be lost ; danger, even, that the travelers themselves, in their dark fear and furious haste, might turn on each other with deadly blows. You remember what an infinite jargon of counsels, from all presses, forums, individual speakers, rent and vexed the gloomy air ; with what passionate eagerness the public sought on every side for some avenue of escape—urging the adoption of one course to day, and of another, its opposite, to-morrow. All voices sounded strange in the darkness ; all paths were obliterated ; all bearings lost. There was a prodigious power in the Nation ; but it was feverish, headstrong, chaotic. There was a terrific onset to be met. The Past showed no instances by which to instruct ; the Future no outlet, toward which to invite. It seemed impossible that any one man should be able to hold and lead the Country ; especially that one without wide fame, without large experience, without the prestige of previous leadership, should be able to guide it into safety.

Measure then the results to which we have come, against the conditions in which we stood, and say if anything short of a Sagacity that seems providential could have brought us out of darkness into day ; along precipice and pitfall, and through the valleys of strife and woe, to the sunlighted summits on which we rest. There is nothing accidental in this result. No happy chances secured it for us. The unusual wisdom of him

who led us is demonstrated by it ;—a wisdom more remarkable, because more rare, than any specific mental faculty ; more lofty than eloquence, more illustrious than song.

And when we examine the path which he trod, however at the time we criticized his steps, our impression of this great property in him becomes more vivid. You can hardly touch a point in his policy where it does not appear.

The tentative nature of his early administration,—his delays to act, by which men were irritated, and at which they sneered, as showing his want of a positive purpose,—yet proved in the end to have been indispensable to make the action, when it was taken, universally acceptable. In the particular form of his measures, as much as in the measures themselves, in the very times at which they were initiated, this Sagacity is discovered. His radicalism showed it ; for it was always conservative and rational, not startling the timid. His conservatism showed it ; for it was always intelligent, not blind, liberal and persuasive, and never imperious.

Reviewing at a glance the whole series of his policy in these swift-whirling and perilous years, we may say that in these five points especially, his Sagacity was revealed. First : in his early perception of the fact that compromise was impossible, and that, with the existing views and temper of the rebel leaders and the disloyal people, the issues at stake between them and the Gov-

ernment had got to be settled by the stern and fearful arbitrament of Battle. Second: in his immediate determination that the war should commence through some unjustified act of aggression on the part of the Revolt, and not through any offensive display of purpose and power on the part of the Government. Third: in his tenacious adherence, from first to last, to the one great end to be secured by the war,—the maintenance of the Government in all its prerogatives, the maintenance of the Republic in its territorial and legal integrity; and in his strict subordination to this of all that he did, of all his refusals to take any action. Fourth: in the constant flexibility of his methods, his readiness to try one thing or another, to see which instrument would be most effective for accomplishing the work in which there was neither rule to guide nor example to instruct him; and in his constant recognition of the fact that the march of events was governing him, while he in turn was influencing it, and that his highest wisdom was to discern what Providence meant to accomplish, and to move in the line of its battalions. And, Finally: in the absolute fixedness of purpose with which he avoided foreign complications, and, postponing everything else, held the Nation to its one work of subduing rebellion, and making the Government everywhere supreme.

Take all these related facts into view,—observe how early they began to appear, and how consistent, steadfast, deliberate, was that administration of public af-

fairs which they represent; how largely this was original with himself, how freely at any rate he accepted it, and how persistently he carried it out,—and surely his immense Sagacity can need no other demonstration. It was his policy. The symmetry of it shows the singleness of the brain by which it was moulded. He surrounded himself with eminent counsellors. It was one fruit of his wisdom that he did so. And they no doubt often influenced him, while in turn instructed or corrected by him. But he was always the head of the Cabinet; so that it sometimes was matter of complaint that he did not yield, as others would have done, to the different preferences or the adverse decisions of those combined in it. The truth is, his policy had to be his own. He took light gladly, but he could not take law, from other minds. And while his counsellors must always have a share, and that a large one, in the credit and renown which belong to his policy, his name must be always first and supremely identified with it. He adopted it because he saw it the best; and whatever opposition or whatever applause it afterward encountered, when his mind was made up it never seems to have subsequently wavered. He knew his plan, what the issue proved it, the wisest thing.

His Sagacity was shown, almost as much as in his policy itself, in the modes and means, in the very forms of statement and illustration, by which he presented it to the public. He could be eloquent, if he would.

Remember the close of his Ohio Letter: "Peace does not appear so distant as it did. I hope it will come soon, and come to stay; and so come as to be worth the keeping. It will then have been proved, that among freemen there can be no successful appeal from the ballot to the bullet, and that they who take such appeal are sure to lose their case, and pay the cost. And then there will be some black men who can remember that with silent tongue, and clenched teeth, and steady eye, and well-poised bayonet, they have helped Mankind on to this great consummation; while I fear that there will be some white men unable to forget that with malignant heart, and deceitful speech, they have striven to hinder it."

But generally the most marked feature of his style was its utter simplicity.

The usual plethoric platitudes of State-papers were curiously contrasted by his simple and sinewy sentences. If an editor wrote to him, he wrote back to the editor, and published his answer. And when the people had got over their astonishment at his audacity, they believed all the more in his utter sincerity. No man ever lived who spoke more directly to the heart of the people. Critics might quarrel with his rhetoric sometimes; but critics themselves could not gainsay the fact that his homely and pithy words had a power beyond all ornate paragraphs. With what absolute completeness and precision was the origin of the war ex-

plained by him, and the course of the People concerning it justified, in this one sentence: "Both parties deprecated war. But one of them would make war, rather than let the Nation survive; and the other would accept war, rather than let it perish;—and the war came!"

His very colloquialisms were mighty for his service. 'We must keep still pegging away,' he said, in the gloomiest period of the war; and every plain man saw his duty, and was nerved to perform it. 'One war at a time:'—all the orators could not answer it; a unanimous press could not have overborne the impression it made. 'The United States Government must not undertake to run the churches:'—the *dictum* is worth a half-dozen duodecimos on the complex relations of Church and State. 'You needn't cross a bridge until you have got to it:'—if men's minds were not relieved of their fears concerning the effect of a general Emancipation, they were at least widely persuaded to postpone these, by the pithy advice. 'The central idea of Secession,' he said in one of his Messages, 'is the essence of Anarchy:' and elaborate pages could not have said more than that one apothegm. It is a head-line for copy-books, for all time to come.

Always, the Sagacity which had selected his policy, and which usually chose with great final correctness the men and the times for putting it in practice, was shown as well in the homely phrase, or proverb, or anecdote, which made it familiar throughout the land.

More than his opponents knew at the time, more than the people themselves were aware, he argued the questions of his administration, he carried the public judgment to his conclusions, by those quaint words which all remembered, and which were repeated with laughing satisfaction at thousands of firesides. His maxims were more effective than his messages; and a score of presses could not have rivaled the service of some of his stories.

With intuitive skill he selected his policy. With a skill almost equal he made the people aware what it was. And when it had been adopted by him he carried it out, as I said before, with a power of Will perhaps as remarkable as was the Sagacity which had planned it.

He had not certainly what is called 'an iron will.' Well for him that he had not! It might have involved the destruction of his influence, and the sacrifice of the interests he was set to conserve. For iron breaks when it is bent; and no man lives, or ever lived, who could have kept his will unbent, amid such times as we have passed. Accumulated defeats, disheartening oppositions, complaints without reason, intolerable delays,—the resolution that boasts itself inflexible might have been fractured beneath the burden, and the very pillars of the Government have been unsettled. But President Lincoln had what was better; a will like strands of tempered steel; flexible in small things, elas-

tic, pliant, and always sheathed in a playful gentleness, but not liable to be snapped, however it was bent, and springing back from every pressure in its primitive toughness. Men called him undecided, vacillating, uncertain; and so he was in minor matters,—in great things, even, till the argument was closed and his mind was made up. But when it was, the same men called him obstinate, headstrong; for nothing could change him. He dismissed more than once his most prominent generals; and all the pressure of persons or parties could no more change his purpose afterward than it could shake the base of the Alleghanies. He retained his Cabinet, against the threat of serious divisions in the party which had chosen him. He would not go to war with England, in the case of the Trent, he would not get involved in a controversy with France, on the question of the French occupation of Mexico, though friends insisted on his taking high ground, and enemies sneered without stay or stint because he did not. He launched the bolt of his Proclamation, against the Slavery which had nourished Rebellion, though a thousand voices prophesied disaster.

Deliberate, till at times he almost seemed dilatory,—unwilling to commit himself till all sides of a question had been thoroughly canvassed, and ready, to the very verge of a fault, to hear to the last the humblest representative of any interest or any opinion,—he was yet

as staunch as the ribs of the Ironsides when his course was decided; and it was like pulling against gravitation, to try thenceforth to detain or deflect him. The tenacity of his will was like that of his muscle, which could hold out an axe at arm's length without a quiver when others drooped. Its influence reminded one of the suck of the under-drift on a sea beach: which does not appear upon the surface, and makes no visible wrestle with the waves, but which carries everything into its current, and compels the strongest and skillfulest swimmer to yield himself vanquished.

Let one other fact, then, be brought to view, and the secret of his Power is perhaps all before us. It is that his powers were so simple, native, and unostentatious, that they hardly impressed men while he was living as so great as they were; they excited no jealousies; they startled no fears; and the popular trust in them was unapprehensive. At the same time they were so original, constitutional, so independent even of training, much more of adventitious aids, that they always were ready for instant use, and only grew more adequate to their work, as its pressure upon them became more tremendous. So, again, he had a power which more brilliant men, or more literary men, would certainly have wanted; and all his force became most effective.

If genius had taken the place of his sagacity, men might have been afraid of him, as they are of the light-

ning. It is splendid, but fitful; and its bolts may drop where they were not expected. But his force was so quiet, patient, pervasive, that it wrought like the vital force in nature, which is not exhibited in any flash, but which streams unheard through the breasts of the earth, and comes to its expression with certainty though with silence, in bud and fruit, and an infinite verdure. If it had been the result of education, and political practice, or of special accomplishments, there would have been something precarious in it. It would have depended somewhat on circumstances. It would have been liable to be shaken, if not shattered, when new and great emergencies were met. But being so native and intrinsic as it was, so wholly the result of his special constitution, it not only gave no sign of yielding, it became ever more thorough and masterly, as it was summoned by grander cares to new exhibition. His nature grew only larger, and more capable, as time went on. His faculties were not wearied by the work they were put to, and remained to the end unworn and fresh.

This essential naturalness, this silentness and constancy, marking his powers, were not favorable perhaps to his instant hold on the public admiration. Men were not surprised by him into bursts of applause. They nowhere saw one mighty figure, cloud-enveloped, iris-crowned, riding with splendid supremacy on the storm, or heard a voice as of Jove himself commanding Peace; and for the time they felt disappointed. But his

power was more universal in its reach because it was quiet; and now that it is gone we honor it the more, because it was essential, not artificial, serene and patient, not impulsive and scenic.

As the sunshine draws less admiration than the picture, but is recognized still as a far grander good; as the river is not so much praised as the fountain, but with its inexhaustible current is a million-fold more mighty and precious; as the stars do not interest our fancy so much as the glittering fire-works which coruscate beneath, while yet they hold the earth itself on its calm poise,—so other statesmen have won more applause than was given to him. In times of paroxysmal excitement they have seemed to show a more supreme and sudden power. But now that he is gone, we miss the Sagacity which lighted up intricate paths like the sunshine. We miss the deep and constant currents of Thought and Will which bore great burdens without a ripple. We feel how grandly secure we were while the star, now hidden in higher splendors, held up with its unfailing influence the very structure and frame of the Government.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:—Such was the Man for whom we mourn; and such the Position in which Providence had placed him. Think then a moment of the Work which he wrought in it, and all our reasons for gladness and for grief, on this day set apart to commemorate him, will be before us.

With the character I have sketched, to give him at once impulse and law, with such effective powers for its instruments, with so many trained and skillful minds eager to help him, and amid the unparalleled opportunities which by his times were opened to him, it might have been expected that his Work should be a great one. It could not even be matter of surprise that it should have a colossal character;—like the reach of the river, along which he had guided his flat-boat in his youth; like the stretch of the prairies, on which he had builded his home as a man. And yet how far, in its actual development, it transcended even such expectations! How singular it is among the recorded achievements of Man! How plainly is revealed in it a higher than any human Will, laying out and arranging the mighty scheme!

When he took in hand the reins of the Government, the finances of the country seemed hopelessly deranged; and after many years of peace it was difficult to raise money, at unprecedented interest, for its daily use. And when he died—after such expenditures as no man had dreamed of, through four long years of devastating war—the credit of the Republic was so firmly established that foreign markets were clamorous for its bonds, and the very worst thing which could have happened, his own destruction, did not depress by one hair's breadth the absolute confidence of our own people in them. When he came to Washington, the navy at the

command of the Government was scattered, almost beyond recall, to the ends of the earth, and was even ludicrously insufficient for instant needs. He left it framed of iron instead of oak, with wholly new principles expressed in its structure, and large enough to bind the continent in blockade, while it made the National flag familiar on every sea which commerce crosses. He found an army remotely dispersed, almost hopelessly disorganized, by the treachery of its officers; with hardly enough of it left at hand to furnish a body-guard for his march to the Capital. He left a half-million of men in arms, after the losses of fifty campaigns,—with valor, discipline, arms, and generalship, unsurpassed in the world, and admonitory to it. He found our diplomacy a by-word and a hissing in most of the principal foreign courts. He made it intelligent, influential, respected, wherever a civilized language is spoken.

In his moral and political achievements at home, he was still more successful. He found the arts of industry prostrated, almost paralyzed indeed, by the arrest of commerce, the repudiation of debts, the universal distrust. He left them so trained, quickened, and developed, that henceforth they are secure amid the world's competition. He came to Washington, through a people morally rent and disorganized;—of whom it was known that a part at least were in full accord with the disloyal plans; and concerning whom it was predicted by some, and feared by many, that the slightest

pressure from the Government upon them would resolve them at once into fighting factions. He laid heavy taxes, he drafted them into armies, he made no effort to excite their admiration, he seemed to throw down even the ancient muniments of their personal liberty; and he went back to his grave through the very same people so knit into one, by their love for each other and their reverence for him, that the cracking of the continent hardly could part them.

At his entrance on his office he found the leaders of the largest, fiercest, and most confident rebellion known to history, apparently in all things superior to himself:—in capacity, in culture, in political experience, in control over men, in general weight with the country itself. And when he was assassinated, he left them so utterly overthrown and discomfited that they fled over sea, or hid themselves in women's clothes. A power it had taken thirty years to mature, a power that put every thing into the contest—money, men, harbors, homes, churches, cities, states themselves—and that fought with a fury never surpassed, he not only crushed but extinguished in four years. A court that had been the chief bulwark of Slavery, he so re-organized as to make it a citadel of liberty and light for all time to come. He found a race immeshed in a bondage which had lasted already two hundred years, and had been only compacted and confirmed by invention and commerce, by arts, legislations, by social usage, by

ethnic theories, and even by what was called religion; he pretended to no special fondness for the race; he refused to make war on its behalf; but he took it up cheerfully in the sweep of his plans, and left it a race of free workers and soldiers.

He came to the Capital of an empire severed, by what seemed to the world eternal lines; with sectional interests, with antithetic ideas, with irremovable hatreds, forbidding reconstruction. He left it the Capital of an empire so restored, that the thought of its division is henceforth an absurdity; with its unity more complete than that of Great Britain; with its ancient flag, and its unchallenged rule, supreme again from the Lakes to the Gulf. Nay: he found a Nation that had lost in a measure its primitive faith in the grand ideas of its own Constitution; and he left that Nation so instructed and renewed, so aware of the supremacy of principles over forces, so committed to the Justice and the Liberty which its founders had valued, that the era of his power has been the era of its new birth; that its history will be nobler and more luminous forever for his inspirations.

Not public achievements are his only memorial. His influence has come, like the 'clear shining after rain,' on the lesser interests, on the private career, on the personal character of the people whom he ruled. He educated a Nation, with the Berserkers' blood in it, into a gentleness more strange than its skill, and more glori-

ous than its valor; a gentleness which even the sight of starved men could not sting into ferocity. Through his personal spirit he restrained and exalted the temper of a continent; and our letters are to be nobler, our art more spiritual, our philanthropy more generous, our very churches more earnest and free, because of what we have learned from him. The public estimation of Honesty is brighter. The sense of the power and grandeur of Character is more intimate in men's minds. We know henceforth what style of manhood America needs, and in her progress tends to produce. We have a new courage concerning the Future. We have a fresh and deeper sense of that eternal Providence which he recognized.

Not to our country has his work been confined. Across the sea extends his influence. It vibrates this hour around the world; and despotic institutions are less secure, the progress of liberty throughout Europe, throughout Christendom, is more rapid and sure, by reason of that which he has wrought. The peoples are more hopeful, and the bayonets are more thoughtful. The millennium of Nations is nearer than it was. The Race itself is lifted forward, toward the gates of mingled gold and pearl that wait to swing, on silent hinges, into the age of Freedom and of Peace.

All this is his Work. Of course he has had immense forces to work with; great counsellors to suggest, great captains and admirals to accomplish; a million brains

to be his helpers; a people full of thought and zeal to inspire his plans, and push them on. Of course God's power, in which he trusted, has gone before and wrought beside him; and he himself, aided by it, has 'builded better than he knew.' But still the Work continues his: since he has accomplished it, while another man, with different powers and a different temper, in the same position, could not have performed it. Without signal genius, or learning, or accomplishments, but with patience, kindness, a faithful will, a masterly sagacity,—planted in times filled full of peril, yet opulent also in immense opportunities, working with instruments so manifold and mighty as have been hardly before entrusted to man, and never before so nobly used,—it has been his to do this Work: to make his Country one and grand; to make the Principles, in which it has its highest glory, supreme forever; to make the World more hopeful, and more free!

In this, then, is the final vindication of his fame; the grandest memorial of his Character and Power which it has yet been given to any man to build on earth. He did it so naturally, that hardly at any point does it give us the impression of extraordinary exertion. He did it so silently, that the world was startled with extremest surprise when it found it accomplished. He did it so thoroughly, that even his death could not interrupt it, could only complete and crown the whole. He might well leave a work so grand when the cap-

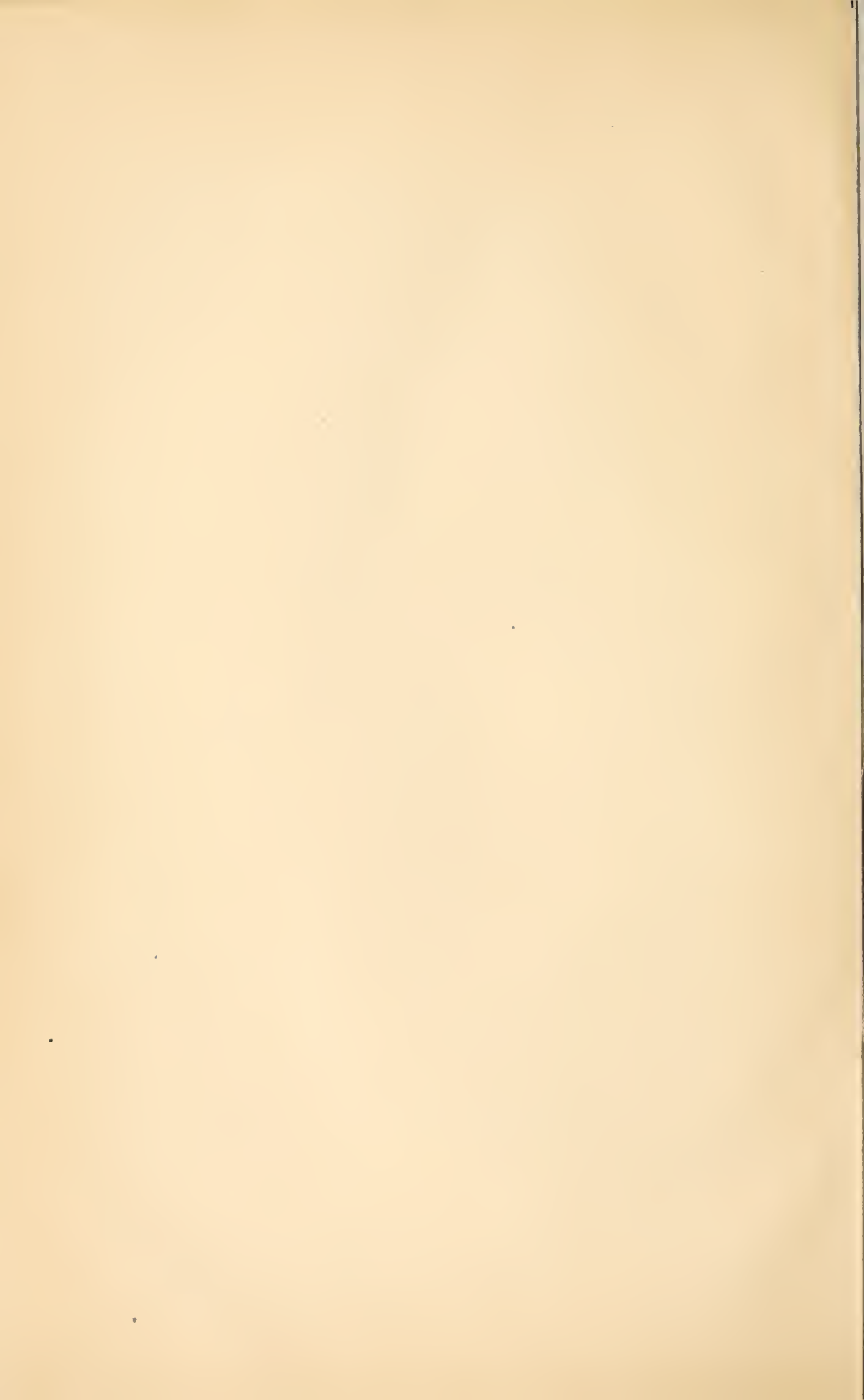
stone had been placed upon it. The flag just lifted anew on Fort Sumter,—symbolic as it was of the War concluded, of the Nation restored,—might well be the signal for his departure. More than almost any other man, he could say with the Lord, looking back on his ministry, “It is finished!”

Reviewing this Work, so vast, so enduring, and so sublime, and looking up unto that which is now for him its consummation, all eulogy is inadequate, if it be not in vain. The monuments we may build—and which it is our instinct and our privilege to build, in all our cities as well as at the Capital, in this city by the sea, as well as in that where his dust sleeps—are not needful to him, but only to the hearts from which they arise, and the future generations which they shall instruct. From the topmost achievement yet realized by man, he has stepped to the skies. He leads henceforth, the hosts whom he marshalled, and who at his word went forth to battle, on plains invisible to our short sight. He stands side by side once more with the orator, so cultured and renowned, with whom he stood on the heights of Gettysburgh; but now on hills where rise no graves, and over which march, in shining ranks, with trumpet-swells and palms of triumph, immortal hosts. He is with the fathers and founders of the Republic; whose cherished plans he carried out, whose faith and hope had in his work their great fruition. He is with all builders of Christian States, who, work-

ing with prescient skill and will, and with true consecration, have laid the foundations of human progress, and made Mankind their constant debtor.

The Heavens are his home. But the Earth and its records will take care of his fame. For of all whom he meets and dwells with there, no one has held a higher trust ; no one has been more loyal to it ; no one has left a work behind more grand and vast. And so long as the Government which he re-established shall continue to endure ; so long as the Country which he made again the home of one Nation shall hold that Nation within its compass, and shall continue to attract to its bosom the liberty-loving from every land ; so long as the People which he emancipated shall make the palmetto and the orange-tree quiver with the hymns of its jubilee ; so long as the Race which he has set forward shall continue to advance, through brightening paths, to the Future that waits for its swift steps,—a fame as familiar as any among men, a character as distinguished, and an influence as wide, will be the fame, the character, and the influence, of him who came four years ago an unknown man from his home in the West, but who has now written in letters of light, on pages as grand and as splendid as any in the history of the World, the illustrious name of

Abraham Lincoln.



ORATION

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BY

R. S. STORRS, JR., D. D.



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